

District Health Department No. 4

For Immediate Release
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Public Health Advisory *Issued September 2, 2021*



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Administrative Services
Alpena County
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On January 29, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued an Order requiring face masks to be worn by all people while on public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States and U.S. territories. Furthermore, the CDC issued recommendations on July 27, 2021, calling for universal indoor masking for teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status, in addition to masking of all people indoors in areas where transmission levels are substantial or high. The July 27, 2021, update from the CDC also recommended testing of individuals 3-5 days after a close contact exposure to an individual confirmed to have COVID-19.

The COVID-19 transmission level for three of District Health Department No. 4 (DHD4) counties as of this advisory is currently **high** and one is **substantial**, signifying widespread community transmission. DHD4 reported 88 total cases of COVID-19 in July 2021 in the four counties jurisdiction of Alpena, Cheboygan, Montmorency, and Presque Isle counties. From August 1 to August 30, 2021, DHD4 has added 389 cases – 342% increase. In the last week, our local hospital authorities have reported a dangerous strain on capacity including limited ICU beds, limited staffing, and extremely long wait times in emergency departments. These situations have resulted in the need to intermittently divert patients to hospitals out of the area, putting further strain on local EMS and hospital capacity for COVID-19 and non-COVID patients.

In DHD4's jurisdiction, 58.4% of residents have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, with the highest coverage being residents 65 and older (81.2%) and the lowest coverage among residents 12-15 (31.3%). Evidence has shown the COVID-19 vaccines are effective at preventing infection, hospitalization and death. Although breakthrough infection can occur, incidence of hospitalization and death due to COVID-19 among vaccinated individuals is significantly lower than that of unvaccinated individuals.

Therefore, District Health Department No. 4 is issuing this Public Health Advisory to provide heightened awareness regarding COVID-19 guidance for our residents to best protect themselves and others. The cooperation of all residents in following best practices and safety precautions is needed to prevent a further unmanageable surge in our local healthcare systems, and to protect the health and safety of citizens.

Increased gatherings, travel, and movement in and about local business establishments during the upcoming holiday presents additional risk to our hospitals, businesses, and community members. Viral transmission is most common, and infection rates are increased, with prolonged exposure times indoors especially when in close proximity to others, which describes typical gatherings with family and close friends. Vaccination continues to be the best protection against the virus, and the most recent addition to the toolkit we have built up throughout this pandemic of prevention measures which includes masking, distancing, testing, contact tracing and more. These tools significantly slow the spread and mutation of COVID-19.

In order to protect our residents, visitors, and employees, DHD4 is advising that you abide by the following guidelines:

1. **Get vaccinated as soon as possible.** DHD4 offers vaccinations, and anyone can schedule an appointment. *Minors must have parental consent for vaccination. To schedule an appointment call 1-800-221-0294
2. **Wear a mask or face covering.** Consistently wear a mask or face covering when you are in public indoor settings or in crowded outdoor areas where you cannot maintain physical distancing, regardless of vaccination status.
3. **If you are sick, stay at home.** Do not leave your residence and do not go to work.
4. **If you have symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, seek testing as soon as possible.** Isolate at home until your test results come back. If necessary, contact your healthcare provider or local health department for assistance.
5. **If you test positive for COVID-19 immediately isolate yourself** and notify your close contacts to quarantine. Do not wait for instruction from the Health Department as there may be delays due to rapidly rising cases. See: If you test positive for COVID-19 www.dhd4.org/covid19.
6. **Quarantine.** If you are a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19, self-quarantine for 10 days from your last contact with them. Continue to monitor for symptoms for the full 14 days after exposure. See: If You Are Exposed to COVID-19 at www.dhd4.org/covid19.
 - a. **If you are fully vaccinated** you do not need to quarantine, unless you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
7. **Adhere to safety precautions.** All residents and visitors should follow precautions while in business establishments including wearing face coverings, social distancing, and capacity limits posted at business entrances.

All residents and businesses are urged to follow all these safety precautions. Failure to do so will perpetuate the spread of COVID-19 and cause prolonged harm to people, local hospitals, and businesses. By following these simple guidelines, the risk for spreading COVID-19 lowers significantly, protecting everyone who lives, works, and plays in beautiful northern Michigan.

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